

Date: June 3, 2008
To: Toronto Public Library Board
From: Adam Chaleff-Freudenthaler
Re: Report on 2008 Canadian Library Association conference

I'd like to lead off my report with thanks to Jo Bryant, Jane Pyper, Vickery Bowles and Kathy Gallagher-Ross. Due to circumstance, I was asked to fill Kathy's shoes at a panel discussion on the relationship between library boards and municipal councils. The presentation was a success but only because of the support of Jo, Jane and Vickery on site and the excellent presentation Kathy had prepared in advance.

Part of a three person panel, my presentation focused on the value in the City of Toronto's selection process for citizen board members, the opportunities inherent in the citizen member role on the board and how having engaged and supportive councillor members strengthens our board's ability to provide good governance to the Library.

The panel discussion culminated with a lively question and answer period. A key topic of discussion in the room, mostly populated by library trustees, was recruiting board members that are reflective of the community the board serves. Though Toronto still has work to do on this front, it was clear that we are, in fact, a national leader in this respect.

The bulk of my time at CLA was spent in seminars so I'd like to highlight a few areas of interest:

- In a session on performance measurement, Mississauga's city librarian indicated that MPL had worked with the City of Mississauga to develop a funding formula to assist them at budget time. For example, a ratio of residents to collections was determined that enabled the MPL to significantly increase its collections budget. A similar formula could be used to increase the number of square feet throughout a library system or the number of open hours.
- A session on advocacy was provided by two former CLA presidents. Their session reaffirmed to me that the TPLB does very well with its advocacy efforts. However, a couple of tactics that we have not employed were raised by the presenters. First, the presenters suggested building an understanding how residents feel about the Library on the terms of decision-makers (for example, polling that indicates whether there is support to pay more taxes for enhanced library services). Second, it was suggested that libraries go beyond the common "swag" with a simple logo on it and begin producing materials that are more likely to be conversation starters. T-shirts with witty slogans or umbrellas with compelling quotes can get people thinking and talking about the role of the library in a grocery store or while waiting for the bus.

- The Vancouver Public Library hosted a seminar that discussed their recent survey of VPL employees to understand their workforce better and ensure that in a highly competitive recruiting environment, the VPL doesn't lose out on talented professionals. The workshop discussed a few key lessons the VPL learned through the process, particularly about the use of consultants and the importance of following through with a process once it is begun.

I also had the opportunity to attend the Canadian Library Trustee Association annual general meeting. The meeting had great energy, as we elected an executive for the Association that is dedicated to growing its active membership and bringing greater value to library trustees who attend CLA conferences through more trustee-focused workshops and networking opportunities.

In summary, I feel that I gained valuable information that will benefit the Library.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent the Library in this capacity.

Respectfully,

Adam Chaleff-Freudenthaler
Member, Toronto Public Library Board